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ABSTRACT

This study examined the type and amount of interaction taking place between mainstream class teachers and English-as-Second-Language (ESL) pupils in primary schools. Teachers at two primary school classes, each at a different school, identified two early-stage ESL pupils in their classes as subjects for the study. Teachers made weekly 30-minute recordings of normal class activities when pupils were expected to be actively engaged in learning tasks. Findings suggest that, while there was a good amount of teacher-pupil interaction, it tended to be teacher-directed. There also did not seem to be many opportunities for teachers and pupils to engage in negotiation of meaning and comprehension checking, which are believed to be important for second language acquisition. The data raise serious questions as to whether the ESL pupils were enjoying the same access to the curriculum as their monolingual English-speaking peers. (JP)

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National Curriculum: ESL in Primary Education in England

A classroom study

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Introduction

There has been a general move towards mainstream integration of ESL pupils in primary schools in the past twenty years or so. By the mid-1980s, after the publication of the Calderdale Report (CRE,1986) there was a strong official endorsement that the best place for young ESL pupils to learn English is the mainstream curriculum classroom. This view has now been implicitly endorsed in the 1988 Education Reform Act which is the instrument for the introduction of the National Curriculum in England (and Wales). The National Curriculum is in effect a set of statutory content specifications for the various subjects. It is intended as an entitlement and all pupils are expected to follow it. ESL pupils are not exempted from this expectation. From the point of view of second language pedagogy we have moved on from the argument that the mainstream classroom environment provides the best second language learning opportunities; the obligatory nature of the National Curriculum means that we will have to adopt a much more content-based approach to ESL pedagogy. (Brinton et al, 1989 and Mohan, 1986) This paper attempts to provide:

a. a brief outline of the main theoretical arguments for this line of thinking in primary education,
b. a short discussion of some specific aspects of current second language acquisition (SLA) research literature with reference to mainstream class teacher-pupil interaction,
c. a description and a summary of the findings of a small-scale study and
d. a preliminary interpretation of the findings with reference to primary education and SLA.

Primary education: theory and practice

The debate on primary education in England in the past fifty years or so has been strongly influenced by a particular view of 'child-centred' (or 'progressive') pedagogy. Blenkin and Kelly (1981:19) suggest that the ideas of Rousseau lie at the heart of this view :'Education is a question of guidance , rather than instruction ' and '... the individual child himself rather than the knowledge itself becomes the focus of the process'. The Hadow Report (Board of Education, 1931:93) states that 'We see that the curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored'. This report also explicitly rejects a view of education which aims 'to secure that children acquired a minimum standard of proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic, subjects in which their attainments were annually assessed

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by quantitative standards'. (Op.cit.:Introduction) This view of primary education received its most explicit articulation in the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council For Education, 1967) which points to the advantages of teaching methods and strategies which promote active or discovery learning and informal teaching approaches which provide the opportunity for a pupil to learn new knowledge and skills on the basis of his/her previous experience and current state of readiness.

Perhaps it would be reasonable to say that this particular interpretation of child-centredness aims at providing all young pupils in primary schools with an education that is personally relevant and meaningful. The premium on meeting individual needs leads to an emphasis on allowing pupils to engage in learning activities which involve active participation and draw on their previous learning and other experiences: pupils engage the learning activities with their current knowledge and skills and teachers respond to learning difficulties on an individual basis. The possibility of a curriculum which is unsuitable and irrelevant in terms of the pupils' readiness and interests is thus avoided.

While this child-centred view of education has been widely endorsed by many teachers, advisers and other senior professionals in the field, there is some evidence that classroom practice does not always conform to this For instance, the HMI Primary Survey (1978) and the Galton ORACLE study (1980) report that child-centred or progressive education ideas have made little impact on actual practice. The Galton research (op.cit.) indicates that the teacher does not have time to engage pupils on the individual basis to deal with individual learning needs. While the pupils' work is often individualised, the teacher's interaction with the individual pupils tends to be focussed on task supervision, instruction and other routine matters. It is also found that teachers rarely use genuinely open-ended and high level cognitive questioning with individual pupils (although there is some evidence that this type of questioning is used in whole class teaching situations). Alexander (1991) observes that there is a tendency for some teachers to use questions even when it is inappropriate and unproductive in an attempt to avoid 'didacticism'. Tizard et al (1988) find that basic skills teaching continues to occupy most teacher and pupil time. It is reported that 65% of all teacher-pupil contacts are accounted for by pupils listening to the teacher, either as a class or on a one-to-one basis; 69% of all teacher-pupil contacts are concerned with the task at hand with the teacher engaged in explaining, informing, demonstrating, questioning or suggesting. Anning (1991) suggests that many teachers of Years 1 and 2 adopt a didactic approach to teaching the 'basics' and a lassez-faire approach to the rest of the curriculum. It would seem that there is a difference between the view adopted by theoreticians and senior professionals in primary education on the one hand and what teachers do on the other.

There has been little explicit discussion on the position of the pupils who speak or are learning to speak English as a second language with reference to the child-centred approach. It is often assumed that in a learning environment which is experience-oriented and responsive to individual needs and where learning is embedded in a context of experiential and discovery activities, the acquisition of a second language will take place naturally. Ipso facto the child-centred approach to curriculum organisation and teacher-pupil interaction will provide for the learning needs of all pupils, including that of the second language pupils. (In this sense, the issue of the English language being both the medium of instruction and the target language for learning has not been properly addressed, merely side stepped.) This assumption in itself requires empirical support. But if, as it has been suggested earlier, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice, there is an added urgency to study the primary classroom from the point of view of the ESL learner. This is all the more so because there are not sufficient ESL teachers to support all the ESL pupils and the mainstream class teacher is often left to work alone with the whole class.

Second Language Acquisition In The Primary Classroom

Second language acquisition in the classroom has been studied from many standpoints. (1) In this small-scale study the focus of attention is the interaction between the mainstream class teacher and the ESL pupil(s). There are two main reasons for this. First, if, as it is generally held to be the case, the primary classroom is frequently organised in such a way that pupils are engaged in learning tasks which are individualised or set in a small group situation, teacher-pupil interaction is crucial to any learning. Individual differentiation is impossible without sufficient interaction. Second, although pupils learn in a variety of ways it is the teacher's sensitively gauged and individually tailored input, through task setting and classroom interaction with the pupils and so on, that underpins the arguments for the child-centred approach. Therefore from the point of view of investigating second language acquisition in the kind of mainstream classroom under discussion, it is very important to study teacher-pupil interaction.

At the same time interaction between learners and teachers has long been recognised as an important aspect of second language acquisition by researchers. (2) Long (1983) suggests that interaction involving two-way exchange of information provides the opportunity for the less competent speaker to provide feedback on his or her lack of comprehension which may lead to further interaction. At this point both parties are involved in an attempt to adjust the language so that the information is understood by the less competent speaker. If successful this negotiated adjustment becomes comprehensible input which may lead to language acquisition. Swain (1985), drawing on her work with the immersion programmes in Canada, argues that it is important for second language learners to produce comprehensible output; in other word, the second

language learner must try to produce comprehensible language in context. Again, the process of interaction between a native-speaker and a second language learner (or in our case, between the teacher and the second language pupil) would provide the opportunity for this type of language use. In a study focussing on the relationship between interactions that took place between one teacher and two pupils over a nine-month period and the process of second language development of the two children Ellis (1985:81) reports that '... it was apparent that ...(the pupils)... were most likely to produce "new " forms when they they were able to nominate the topic of conversation and when the teacher helped them by supplying crucial chunks of language at the right moment.' As Allwright and Bailey (1991:123) put it:'... it is the work required to negotiate interaction that spurs language acquisition, rather than the intended outcome of the work ...' There seems to be some provisional empirical evidence to suggest that teacher-pupil interaction which encourages negotiation and speech adjustments plays an important part in the process of second language acquisition. 'If negotiation... is the key of acqusition , it is important to discover how and to what extent this takes place in the ordinary classroom.' (Ellis, 1985:83) It should perhaps be pointed out here that at the present time SLA research in general does not have an established theoretical paradigm (Gregg, 1989) and this is particularly true of the work carried out within the interactionist perspective. This small-scale study should be regarded as an instance of medium range hypothesis building and testing.

A Small-scale Study Of Two Key Stage One ESL Pupils (3)

a. Aim of the study

The main aim of the study was to collect naturally occurring data in primary classrooms in respect of the the type/s and the amount of interaction between the class teacher and the ESL pupil.

b. Type of research

The design of this study reflects the requirements of descriptive research. (Seliger and Shohamy,1990) The observations and analysis will focus on the aspects of the data specified in advance (see the items in the data analysis section below). The deductive premise is that, ceteris paribus, the aspects of teacher-pupil interaction in focus are held to promote second language acquisition.

c. Description of the two schools

The small-scale study was carried out in two classes in two primary schools located in an urban environment in the south of England. School A had 269 pupils on roll including 60 part-time places in the nursery unit. 102 of the pupils were from an ethnic minority background and 94 were bilingual/ESL (35%). There were 30 pupils in the class where the study was conducted and 50% of this class were bilingual/ESL, most of whom were from a Pahari-speaking (Pakistani) background. The target pupil was a Pahari-speaking Year 1 pupil in a Key Stage 1 combined Years 1 and 2 class. School B had 172 pupils on roll including 60 part-time places in the nursery unit. 129 of the pupils were bilingual/ESL (75%), most of whom were from a Sylheti-speaking (Bangladeshi) or an Urdu-speaking (Pakistani) background. There were 26 pupils in the class where the study was conducted and 65% of this were bilingual/ESL. The target pupil was a Year 2 pupil from a Sylheti-speaking background in a combined Years 1, 2 and 3 class. (4) The teaching staff concerned were native speakers of English and they did not speak the home languages of the pupils.

d. Data collection

The data collection took place over a 14-week period during the Autumn Term 1991. The class teachers concerned were asked to help identify two early-stage ESL pupils (one in each school) in their classess as the subjects for this study. The teachers were asked to make a weekly 30-minute audio-tape recording of normal classroom activities when pupils were expected to be actively engaged in learning tasks. We made it very clear at the beginning that we were looking for naturally occurring data. In other words, we did not want the teachers to plan any specific programme of work or interaction with the targeted pupils for the purpose of this study. The specific focus of the study was on the classroom activities (and the teacher-pupil interaction thereof) and not the conduct of any particular teacher or pupil. We encouraged the teachers to decide for themselves when the weekly recording should take place because of the fluid nature of the primary curriculum organisation. We were simply interested in data which would capture some evidence of teacher-pupil interaction involving use of language during the time when pupils were expected to be working on learning tasks. In the event School A made 17 recordings and School B made 10 recordings. (5)

The recordings were made on two tape-recorders in each classroom simultaneously. The teacher's speech was recorded on a Walkman machine (which was carried by teacher using a special waist belt). The pupil's speech was recorded by a separate recorder using a radio-transmitter microphone. The pupil only had to carry a light weight transmitter unit and a microphone which allowed complete freedom of movement within a radius of 50 metres.

e. Data analysis

The audio-recordings were transcribed and analysed using a scheme derived from a number of other schemes. (6) The pupil tapes were used as the primary source of data. The teacher tapes were used as a source for confirmation. The discourse analytical unit adopted in this study is 'turn' as defined by Chaudron (1988:45). A turn is any speaker's sequence of utterances bounded by another speaker's speech. There are five items in this particular analytical scheme (see data below):

1. teaching and task negotiation,
2. teacher-pupil interaction time,
3. length of utterance,
4. speech adjustment (by teacher) and
5. initiation of interaction and discourse/interaction termination.

Each of these items will be commented on in turn.

1. Teaching and task negotiation

This item was derived and adapted from the Information Gap item in the COLT observation scheme (Allen et al, 1990). (7) It has two components: teaching and task negotiation. There are four sub-components within the teaching component. Information requesting is further divided into display request and information request. Display request refers to an instance when the the speaker already possesses the information requested. Information request refers to an instance when the speaker does not know the information requested in advance. (Allen et al, op.cit.:80) Information giving refers to an instance when information is offered, either as a response to a request or as an initiation of interaction. Explicit instruction or information check refers to an instance of teacher-fronted instruction or pupil checking on such instruction. Follow-up is further divided into feedback and praise. Feedback refers to an instance of the teacher commenting on a piece of work, giving further advice to a pupil on the task in hand or evaluating the merit of a piece of work. Praise refers an instance of the teacher rewarding the pupil with appreciation and positive evaluation. Task negotiation refers to an instance of the teacher directing and assigning the pupil with a task or an instance of the pupil clarifying or contesting such teacher direction. (8)

2. Teacher-pupil interaction time

This item is a quantitative measure of the amount of time the teacher and the target pupil were engaged in interaction which involved the use of language for exchange. It was recognised that this should be regarded

as, at best, an approximate measure because the technical difficulties involved in determining the exact amount ot time the teacher and the pupil were engaged in interaction from the audio-recording.

3. Length of utterance (in each turn)

This item was drawn and adapted from the COLT observation scheme (op.cit.) There are three categories:

a. ultraminimal refers to utterances which consist of one word,

b. minimal refers to utterances which consist of one clause (in the Hallidayan sense of that term) and

c. sustained speech refers to utterances which are longer than one clause.

4. Speech adjustment (by teacher)

This item was drawn and adapted from a synthesis of the works in this area by Chaudron (1988:45). There are seven categories:

a. Repetition refers to an exact repeating of a previous utterance by the pupil:

(Activity about posting letters)

P: (indistinct speech - straw in mouth)

T: in the what?

take your straw out of your mouth

I can't hear what you're saying ...

P1: in the post box

P: in the post box

T: in the post box

would you like to go and do it

b. Expansion refers to a partial or full repetition which modifies some portion of a previous utterance by adding syntactic or semantic information:

(Talking about a story)

P: then he said go and get some water one two three four five

T: five brooms

c. Clarification request refers to a request for further information from the pupil about a previous utterance:

(Talking about a story)

P: he he's going to fall off

T: who's going to fall off

d. Comprehension check refers to the teacher's query of the pupil as to whether s/he (the pupil) has understood the teacher's previous utterance:

(Drawing activity)

T: now you draw that picture exactly like that

two cakes

P: two

T: here

P: and three

T: ok do you know what you're doing

e. Confirmation check refers to the teacher's query as to whether her/his (the teacher's) understanding of the pupil's meaning is correct:

(Telling a story)

P: miss he's doing like that to get there's the broom door they got two door

T: two doors

f. Repair refers to an attempt by the teacher to alter or rectify a previous utterance which was in some way lacking in clarity or correctness:

(This example is not from the transcribed data. See data in findings section below.)

P: he has a five table

T: he has five tables

g. Model refers to a prompt by the teacher intended to elicit an exact imitation or to serve as an examplary response to an elicitation:

(Talking about a story)

P: they clean the little boy

the the

T: the the the

the little

5. Initiation of interaction and discourse/interaction termination

This items was drawn (and expanded) from the COLT observation scheme (op.cit.). Inititation of interaction is divided into a bipolar distinction: successful or unsuccessful. (Because of the focus of this study we were only interested in teacher-target pupil interactions and not teacher-whole class interactions.) The following are some examples of successful and unsuccessful initiations:

T: (Walking towards pupil) right Salil

(Leading to interaction with pupil - successful initiation)

P: miss Furhan keeps swearing at me

(Leading to teacher attention - successful initiation)

P: miss (tape counter no.178)

miss (tape counter no.187)

miss I maded it miss I maded it (tape counter no.193)

(No teacher response at this point - unsuccessful initiation)

Discourse /interaction termination is divided into three categories: completion of task, interruption and other. Interaction here refers to any exchange between the teacher and the target pupil which may be very short consisting of two turns or very extended consisting a large number of turns. It was felt that in a classroom situation where a number of small working groups or individuals were engaged in different learning tasks, it would be interesting to find out more about who initiated interaction and how it ended. 'Completion of task ' refers to the task at hand in a particular interaction; it does not refer to the completion of a task which may be an on-going project spanning over several sessions or days or weeks. The following is an example:

T: ok so how many here

P: three

T: three add three make

P: six

T: right

write three add three make

(Teacher moving away from pupil.)

Interruption refers to interruption by other pupils or events. The following is an example:

(Teacher acting as scribe for pupil.)

P: go go fast and get the bucket they went and they came back and

said go fetch some water all of you

T: (tape counter no.352) go fast and get some bucket you speak fast I can't write all of this

down he's a bit rude to them isn't he go fast and get some water

(Another adult walked into room and spoke to teacher.)

T: (tape counter no.364) the boy said go fast and get some bucket

P: no water

(Teacher was interrupted again.)

P: (tape counter no.366) I get some water water

(No teacher response and no further interaction.)

Other refers to disengagement by either party without reference to the task at hand:

(Talking about a story)

T: who's going to fall off

P: the boy off the bike

T: why will he fall off

P: because he hasn't got a seat

T: what on the bike

P: (code-switched into Pahari)

(No further interaction.)

f. Findings

Key: S= speaker
I= interlocutor
Oc= occurrence
Av= average
T= teacher
P= pupil

School A (No. of sessions - 17)

	S	I	Oc	Av
I. A Teaching				
1. Information request				
a Display request	T	P	3	0.17
	P	T	0	0
b. Information request	T	P	55	3.2
	P	T	8	0.47
2. Information giving	T	P	9	0.52
	P	T	153	9
3. Explicit instruction	T	P	92	5.4
or information check	P	T	6	0.35
4. Follow-up				
a. Feedback	T	P	15	0.88
	P	T	1	0.05
b. Praise	T	P	16	0.94
	P	T	0	0
B Task negotiation	T	P	45	2.6
incl. clarification or	P	T	14	0.82
contest				

II. Teacher-pupil interaction time (average) 4.4 minutes per session

III. Length of utterance

	P	T	Oc (total)
a. Ultraminimal	42	10	52
b. Minimal	108	91	199
c. Sustained	52	132	184
	202	233	435

IV. Speech adjustment (by teacher)

	No. of Oc. (total)
a. Repetition	4
b. Expansion	3
c. Clarification	2
d. Comprehension check	2
e. Confirmation check	2
f. Repair	0
g. Model	1

V. A Initiation of interaction

	No. of Occurrence P	T
No. of successful initiation	33	22
No. of unsuccessful initiation	53	0

B Discourse/interaction termination

	No. of Occurrence
Completion of task	18
Interruption	10
Other	27

School B (No. of sessions - 9)

	S	I	Oc	Av	
I. A Teaching					
1. Information request					
a. Display request		T	P	19	2.1
	P	T	0	0	
b. Information request	T	P	33	3.6	
	P	T	7		0.77
2. Information giving	T	P	23	2.5	
	P	T	154	17.1	
3. Explicit instruction		T	P	128	14.2
or information check		P	T	11	1.2
4. Follow-up					
a. Feedback	T	P	14	1.5	
	P	T	0	0	
b. Praise	T	P	16	1.7	
	P	T	0	0	
B Task negotiation	T	P	67	7.4	
incl. clarification or	P	T	60	6.6	
contest					

II. Teacher-pupil interaction time (average) 7.5 minutes per session

III. Length of utterance

	P	T	Oc (total)	
a. Ultraminimal	64	0	64	
b. Minimal	150	126	276	
c. Sustained	42	157	199	
		256	283	539

IV. Speech adjustment (by teacher)

	No. of Oc. (total)
a. Repetition	10
b. Expansion	1
c. Clarification	2
d.Comprehension check	4
e. Confirmation check	6
f. Repair	0
g. Model	8

V. A Initiation of interaction

	No. of Occurrence	
	P	T
No. of successful initiation	42	19
No. of unsuccessful initiation	21	0

B Discourse/interaction termination

	No. of Occurrence
Completion of task	18
Interruption	2
Other	42

School A + B (Combined no. of sessions - 26)

	S	I	Average occurrence
I. A Teaching			
1. Information request			
a. Display request	T	P	0.84
	P	T	0
b. Information request	T	P	3.38
	P	T	0.57
2. Information giving	T	P	1.23
	P	T	11.80
3. Explicit instruction	T	P	8.46
or information check	P	T	0.65
4. Follow-up			
a. Feedback	T	P	1.1
	P	T	0.03
b. Praise	T	P	1.2
	P	T	0
B Task negotiation	T	P	4.3
incl. clarification or	P	T	2.8
contest			

II. Teacher-pupil interaction time (combined average) 5.5 minutes per session

III. Length of utterance

	P	T	Oc (total)
a. Ultraminimal	106	10	116
b. Minimal	258	217	475
c. Sustained	94	289	383
	458	516	974

IV. Speech adjustment (by teacher)

	No. of Oc. (total)
a. Repetition	14
b. Expansion	4
c. Clarification	2
d.Comprehension check	6
e.Confirmation check	8
f. Repair	0
g. Model	9

V. A Initiation of interaction

	No. of Occurrence (total) P	T
No. of successful initiation	75	41
No. of unsuccessful initiation	74	0

B Discourse/interaction termination

	No. of Occurrence (total)
Completion of task	36
Interruption	12
Other	69

g. Summary of findings

The findings reported above show that the teacher-pupil interaction in School A and School B differed in some important respects. At the same time there were similarities.

1. Teaching and task negotiation

In both classes asking for information tended to be carried out by the teachers. Giving information, on the other hand, was largely done by the pupils. There were more occurrences of such interaction at School B. Both teachers offered explicit instruction with the teacher at School B showing a much higher propensity to do so - an average of over 14 occurrences per session.

There was some evidence of the teachers trying to provide feedback to the pupils. The teacher at School B showed a greater inclination to do so - an average of 1.5 occurrences per session as opposed to 0.88 for the teacher at School A.

There was some evidence of the teachers praising the work of the target pupils. The teacher at School B showed a greater inclination to do so than the teacher at School A - 1.7 occurrences per session as opposed to 0.94.

There was a major difference in the way task negotiation was handled in the two cases. The School A teacher was engaged in this type of interaction on 2.6 occasions per session and the pupil 0.82; in School B the corresponding figures were 7.4 and 6.6. In other words, both the teacher and the pupil in School B were much more frequently involved in working out what tasks should be undertaken.

2. Teacher-pupil interaction time

The teacher and the pupil seemed to be engaged in interaction for more time in School B than those in School A. The average time for School A was 4.4 minutes per session (12.6% approx.) and the corresponding figure for School B was 7.5 minutes (25%). The overall average for both schools was 5.5 minutes (18% approx.).

3. Length of utterances

In both cases the teachers tended to produce more sustained speech (well over 50%) and, taking the two sets of data together, the bulk (79%) of the pupils' utterances were either one-word or one-clause utterances. Overall the teacher and the pupil at School B produced more utterances.

4. Speech adjustment

Both teachers made attempts to make negotiated adjustments. There were significant differences in ways the two teachers made such adjustments. In School A repetition seemed to be used more often than any of the others. In School B repetition was used more often than the others but model and confirmation check were also used by the teacher quite frequently. Overall the teacher at School B seemed to engage in this type of interaction more frequently.

5. Initiation of interaction and discourse/interaction termination

Both teachers initiated interaction and they were always successful. The pupils' experiences were somewhat different. At School A the pupil attempted 86 initiations and he was successful 33 times (38% approx.)

whereas at School B the pupil attempted 63 initiations and he was successful 42 times (66% approx.). Taking the two sets of data together the pupils had a 1 in 2 chance of being successful.
There was also some differences in the ways interaction terminated in the two sets of data. At School A approximately 32% of the terminations were due to completion of tasks; at School B the corresponding figure was 29%. Interruption was more significant in School A than in School B: 18% as opposed to 3% in School B approximately. The category of 'other' seemed to be significant in both cases:49% for School A and 67% for School B approximately.

Interpretation Of Findings

The size of the data in this small-scale study does not warrant any firm interpretation to be made. It is, however, possible to make some tentative observations:
a. The general pattern of teacher-pupil interaction tends to conform to the layman's view of what goes on in the classroom: the teacher asking questions and giving instructions and the pupil giving information (either as answers or as voluntary information hoping to initiate interaction, e.g. 'Finish , miss'). The relatively infrequent occurrence of the teacher giving information (when not giving explicit instruction) and providing feedback further points to the teacher dominance in the teacher-pupil interaction.
b. The actual amount of time the teacher and the pupil are engaged in interaction in itself does not say anything about the quality of teaching and learning; but it does indicate the potential for teaching and learning. To extrapolate on the basis of an average of 5.5 minutes per 30-minute session, over a school day of 5 hours the amount of teacher-pupil interaction time would be 55 minutes a day. This would seem a reasonable amount of interaction time per pupil. But clearly this cannot be managed for every pupil in the class. There simply is not enough time available for this to happen. (This may turn out to be the effect of the requirement of having to make a recording for outside researchers.)
c. The data from both classrooms indicates that the pupils tended to produce short one-word or one-clause utterances in their speech. Assuming all the language used by the teacher was understood (i.e. comprehensible input), there would still be the question whether the pupils were given the necessary opportunities to produce the target language (i.e. comprehensible output) which is held to be important in second language acquisition.
d. Given the very low level of occurrence of speech adjustment (taking the data from the two classrooms together, repetition, the most used category, only occurred on average 0.53 time per 30-minute session), one must question whether there was sufficient amount of negotiation of meaning and checking of comprehension. The point here is that the work involved in such negotiation is held to be important in second language acquisition.

e. The number of successful/unsuccessful teacher initiation of interaction indicates the level of command the teacher has over the pupil's attention (and very likely their activites) in the classroom. The data from both of the classrooms indicates that the teachers had complete control in this respect. The number of successful/unsuccessful pupil initiations of interaction indicates how responsive the teacher is. A number of considerations, e.g. class size and the nature of the teaching activity at hand, should be taken into account before making any interpretation. Given that both classess were engaged in broadly similar activities, it would seem the higher success rate of pupil initiation in School B was at least partially accounted for by the smaller class size. The way interactions terminate may reflect the pupil's learning experience. It is clear that in a classroom situation it is improbable that all interactions will terminate at the completion of a task (as defined earlier). Nevertheless it would seem reasonable to suggest that task completion as the reason for termination is more helpful for the pupil than other kinds of termination. The data indicates that, taking the two classrooms together, 30% approx. of all interaction were terminated as a result of the completion of a task; 10% as a result of interruption by other pupils or events and 60% approx. as a result of other causes. (A closer examination of the 'other' terminations in the raw data revealed that some instances of disengagement from interaction without any reference to the task at hand seemed to be based on a shared understanding that the task was to go on and other instances seemed to indicate that the teacher had been distracted.)

Conclusion

This small-scale study was designed to look at the type/s and amount of teacher pupil interaction in two primary classrooms. The research design and the focus of the analysis produced the types of information required. From the point of view of research methods there were three specific problems. First, the amount of teacher-pupil interaction time recorded in the data seems to be much greater than what 'normal' classroom experience would suggest. This may have been a specific case of the observer's paradox. In a way this 'distortion' was actually useful in that it provided an unexpectedly rich data base on what the teachers presumably would do with the pupils any way. Second, it was difficult to determine the cause of some instances of termination of interaction. The apparent 'drifting away' requires a more sensitive research design informed by the experiences of class teachers and pupils. In itself this lack of ability on our part to explain this type of phenomena does not distort the data. Third, it was quite difficult at times to operate some of the categories within speech adjustment. For instance, it was not always easy to distinguish between repetition and clarification. There was a certain amount of arbitrariness in the analysis in this respect. Perhaps greater use of ethnographic techniques might help overcome this problem. A full-scale study will have to address these issues carefully.

Having said that, the preliminary findings suggest that while there was a good deal of teacher-pupil interaction, it was not always the kind of interaction one might have expected from a child-centred classroom; it tended to be teacher-led or teacher-directed. Furthermore there did not seem to be many opportunities for teachers and pupils to be engaged in meaning negotiation and comprehension checking which are held to be important for second language acqusition. Given that the content of the curriculum activities was (and is) encoded in the English language in the classroom and that for our second language pupils the learning of the curriculum content and the acquiring/learning of the English language were, for all intents and purposes, the selfsame process, the data collected in this study would seriously question whether the pupils were enjoying the same access to the curriculum as their monolingual English-speaking peers.

Our findings were consistent with an emergent understanding in this field. It would seem that the current assumptions about second language acquisition in the mainstream classroom are more concerned with exposure and communicative use. While these are undoubtedly important considerations they do not constitute the sufficient conditions of acquisition. (Slimani-Rolls, 1987; Spolsky,1989 and Bialystok, 1991) We should make a concerted effort to re-examine our assumptions and find ways of developing a more effective practice to make the mainstream classroom a productive and conducive environment for second language pupils to develop their English language and to work on the content of the curriculum.

Notes

1.Recent second language classroom research has focussed mainly on four areas: learning from instruction, teacher talk, learner behaviour and interaction in the classroom. (Chaudron, 1988) It should be pointed out that a great deal of work done on interaction tends to be on a small scale and there is no large-scale evidence to show that interaction, as it is understood here, has a causal relationship with second language acquisition. It is thought that if the research design and instruments used in this small-scale study yield the
required data, it may be possible to begin to look at the validity of this particular aspect of SLA theorisation;
in other words, we may be able to demonstrate whether long-term SLA is in some way related to interaction.

2.This is not to deny the importance of interaction between second language learners themselves.

3.The National Curriculum divides the compulsory schooling years into four Key Stages; Key Stage One covers the first two years of primary schooling-chronologically ages 5-7 approximately.

4. Primary schools often organise class (year) groupings vertically. Due to staff and pupil absences on some occasions a different class teacher and pupil (of the same age and linguistic background) were substituted for the data collection. This did not materially affect the quality and the validity of the data in-so-far-as this small-scale study was primarily concerned with classroom interactions and not the behaviour

of individual teachers or pupils.

5. Although we only requested a weekly recording we did encourage the teachers to do more if possible, just in case of equipment breakdown and so on. Due to equipment failure and (teacher and pupil) sickness School B succeeded in making only 9 recordings.

6. There is a long-standing problem with the proliferation of different analytical schemes making comparability difficult. At the same time it is acknowledged that researchers tend to have different aims and work in diverse circumstances making the adoption of a universal scheme improbable. For a discussion see Chaudron (1988: Ch.2) and Allwright and Bailey (1991: Part I).

7. The COLT (communicative orientation of language teaching) observation scheme was devised to 'measure features of communication typical of classroom discourse ...' (Allen et al, 1990:59)

8. In terms of Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) discourse analysis teaching and task negotiation may reasonably be located at the rank of exchange and the sub-components at the rank of move.

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